



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEW VETERANS HOME

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce that contractors began mobilizing equipment and resources to the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home campus this week. Site preparation work is scheduled to begin Dec. 2, which will include demolition of Building 4 and earthwork. Crews will begin foundation work Jan. 20, 2014.

"The project was delayed a little due to the original escalated bids, but we are pleased that the project was rebid and we are within the budget," said Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Larry Zimmerman. "J. Scull Construction is the Construction Manager at Risk for this project, and we are looking forward to working with their team."

The newly designed Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veteran's Home is a 133,000 square foot stacked two-story building with a lower level walk-out main entrance. The 100-bed facility will be used to serve South Dakota veterans and contains 52 skilled nursing beds on the main level and 48 non-skilled or residential living beds on the upper level. The living spaces are broken into eight neighborhoods housed in eight wings. Each neighborhood includes a living room, dining room, and kitchen area that will provide a home-like environment to the 12-13 occupants housed in each neighborhood. The design incorporates residential type furnishings and finishes, and warm, welcoming colors to reduce the institutional look and give the spaces a more comfortable feel.

"As the project moves forward we will continue to post updates at <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>," said Secretary Zimmerman.



Inside this issue:

Veterans Commission Meeting	2
Cabela's Wounded Warrior Reception	2
Wilcox Retirement Party	3
SD Guard Explores Tribal Partnerships	4-5
Post 8 American Legion Aux. Supports SDNG Museum	6
VA Home Loan Webinar	6
Upcoming Events	7

VETERANS COMMISSION TO MEET

South Dakota's Veterans Commission is scheduled to meet Wednesday, December 4, at 10:00 am (CT) via conference call. This meeting will afford SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman the opportunity to brief the Commission on legislative issues as well as the Governor's budget address.

The agenda for the Commission meeting can be found at the following link:
<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/aboutsddva/Dec%202013%20Commission%20Agenda.pdf>

WOUNDED WARRIOR RECEPTION TO BE HELD AT CABELA'S

The Cabela's store in Mitchell will honor the contributions of those who serve our country and communities by holding a reception on Sunday November 24th at 3:00pm for participants of the Warriors Never Give Up Pheasant Hunt. Warriors Never Give Up is a nonprofit organization offering hunting adventures for current wounded warriors, combat Vietnam veterans, and kids.

The group will be stopping by the store at 3:00pm on Sunday to gear up for the hunt and get their South Dakota hunting licenses. The store has also arranged for a police escort to the store, presentation of the colors by the National Guard and a reception in the conference room that is open to the public. The Warriors Never Give Up Group will hunt at On the Point in Ipswich, SD the following Monday.

"There is no way to properly thank these soldiers for all they have done for our country as they deserve so much more than a reception at the store, it's the least we can do," said Jen Johnston, Cabela's Event Coordinator. "We are honored to be part of this wonderful organization and look forward to meeting these heroes on Sunday."

In addition to offering hunting adventures to our hero's, Warriors Never Give Up is dedicated to raising money for organizations and local charities with similar visions and values that want to make a difference in people's lives.

For more information, or to donate to the organization visit their website at www.warriorsnevergiveup.org or contact Jen Johnston, Cabela's Event Coordinator, at 605-995-4476. Cabela's is located off I-90 exit 332 in Mitchell.



FRIENDS BID WILCOX FAREWELL

Friends, staff, community leaders, veterans and their families gathered at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home last week to wish retiring Superintendent Larry Wilcox the best in his endeavors.

Stories were shared, gifts were presented and the culmination of Larry's career was highlighted by staff.

Wilcox was named superintendent in 2004 by Maj. Gen. Michael Gorman. Larry is a Gulf War Veteran with a strong background in medical services and served 38 years in the South Dakota National Guard.

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman wished Wilcox the best in his retirement endeavors and thanked him for his service to South Dakota's veterans. "You were here when we embarked on our journey to construct a new state veterans home and I promise you we will keep this project moving forward," said Zimmerman.

"Thank you for your support Larry, all of us here wish you all the health, love and happiness you so much deserve."

LaVonne Gaspar has been named the interim superintendent. LaVonne is a South Dakota native and has had a long term career with Avera. LaVonne enjoys spending time with her grandchildren, sewing, walking and reading.

"LaVonne Gaspar brings decades of experience, knowledge and most importantly the HEART to help us at the Veterans Home," said Secretary Zimmerman. Gaspar spent her first day touring the campus and meeting the staff and being briefed. "Her nursing and management capabilities were very apparent," said Zimmerman. "The exchange with residents and staff showed all that she is committed to taking care of veterans and their families."



SD GUARD EXPLORES PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH TRIBES

Leaders from the South Dakota National Guard met with representatives from several Native American tribes in Pierre Thursday, Nov. 14, to discuss partnership opportunities for community service projects on their reservations.

Representatives from the Yankton, Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes listened to briefings on the role and capabilities of the Guard, and how they are able to support communities with engineer construction, material transportation and medical support services.

Both Guard leaders and tribal members saw the meeting as an opportunity to generate awareness of Guard services, what some of the needs are on the reservations and how they can work together.

"We wanted to engage the tribes to enter into a partnership with the South Dakota National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "The partnership would involve the National Guard conducting training on the reservations that would result in improvements to the infrastructure, such as road development, construction services, providing medical care and other types of support that are consistent with the missions of the Guard."

"It was a very good and informative meeting," said Kevin Keckler, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. "I'm very interested in some of the support the Guard can assist us with."

"It is really helpful to our community members to have that assistance from the National Guard," said Everdale Songhawk, councilman for the Yankton Sioux Tribe. "The relationship with the Guard continues with our people and we want to continue to work together, meet our goals and complete some projects."

Some of the potential projects discussed included medical screenings and examinations, veterinarian services, firewood transportation and road construction and maintenance.

"We have a cemetery that is built in a river valley and we continually have flooding issues every spring," said Keckler. "We are hoping to do a joint project with the Guard to create berms around the cemetery to prevent future flooding. We have a lot of veterans that are buried there, and I think it would mean a lot to our people to have that not happen anymore."

"We are looking at a boat ramp project in the Yankton area, as well as having some road work done at the Marty Indian School," said Songhawk.



SD GUARD EXPLORES PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES WITH TRIBES (CONTINUED)

The National Guard provides community services through its Innovative Readiness Training program, or IRT. The IRT program partners with local organizations to provide a benefit to communities while providing hands-on, readiness-training opportunities for the Guard and other U.S. military units throughout the country. The program is built upon the long-standing tradition of the National Guard, acting as good neighbors at the local level in applying military personnel to assist worthy civic and community needs.

"The National Guard is a community-based organization," said Reisch. "We want to go out and continue to partner with our communities so we can continue to have membership from a broad range of communities, as well as provide services to them."

Over the years, the National Guard has provided some public service projects for Native American communities to include delivering firewood and conducting Indian Health Services missions to the Pine Ridge, Crow Creek, Rosebud and Lower Brule reservations.

"The National Guard this summer brought more than 50 loads of firewood to our communities," said Keckler. "That was very helpful to us and it is evident today because we are into the winter heating season, and we haven't had many requests for wood, so the people that needed that wood got it. The Guard was also there to help with veterinary services – rabies vaccinations for dogs and cats – and that's always helpful."

The IRT program also focuses on providing service member training within their military occupational skill set, which includes carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, engineering, transportation, and all aspects of medical care. Resource support for projects is a shared responsibility between the military and community – the Guard provides the manpower while the community provides the materials and supplies. The Guard also ensures a project will not compete with local contractors or businesses.

"The partnership is a benefit to our organization because it allows our Soldiers and Airmen perfect their skills and to do their missions in a new environment, which allows us to get better at our jobs while simultaneously providing a service to the Native American tribes," said Reisch.



POST 8 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY DONATES TO SDNG MUSEUM

Post 8 American Legion Auxiliary President Jeannine Loesch presented Sonja Johnson director of SDNG Museum a \$100 check for the Museum. Funds will go toward the museum's fundraiser to install a new ceiling and renovate the lighting in the north gallery.

"It's great to have the support of our Veterans Service Organizations," said Johnson. "Our fundraiser this weekend is a great opportunity for us to raise the awareness regarding the Museum and thank all of our partners that have supported us."

We hope to see you all at the American Legion on Saturday evening (7:00 – 11:00 pm)!



VA HOME LOAN WEBINAR

The Federal VA- Home Loan Guaranty at the St. Paul Minnesota Regional Loan Center has scheduled another webinar with information on delinquent home loans.


The webinar will be held on Wednesday, December 11, at 10:00 am CST.

This interactive webinar will cover options that veterans have to potentially resolve home loan delinquency and alternatives to foreclosure. To view the webinar, visit <http://deptveterans.adobeconnect.com/foreclosureassistance/>

There is limited space available, so be sure to log in a few minutes early and reserve your spot. If you are unable to enter the webinar or would like more information, please contact the St. Paul Regional Loan Center at RLCVALERI.VBASPL@va.gov

DO YOU KNOW OF A VETERAN WHO IS EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP AND IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR HOME?


ARE THEY TRYING TO WORK WITH THEIR MORTGAGE SERVICER BUT FEEL LIKE THEY ARE GETTING NOWHERE?




We May Be Able to Help!

Please attend our FREE webinar to receive information on mortgage defaults, so you can better assist our Veterans in need, on Wednesday, December 11th at **10:00 am CST**.

Hosted by the Department of Veterans Affairs
St. Paul, Regional Loan Center



To view the webinar, visit the website below on December 11th:
<http://deptveterans.adobeconnect.com/foreclosureassistance/>



There is limited space available, so be sure to log in a few minutes early and reserve your spot. If you are unable to enter the webinar or would like more information, please contact the St. Paul Regional Loan Center at RLCVALERI.VBASPL@va.gov.

Upcoming Events

2013

Dec. 14— Wreaths Across America Ceremony Wildwood Mausoleum at the Hills of Rest Memorial Park—300 N. Chapel Hill Road—Sioux Falls—11:00
Dec. 4—SD Veterans Commission Meeting
Dec. 6—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—American Legion—Watertown
Dec. 7—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—DAV Post—Sioux Falls
Dec. 14—SD Veterans Council Legislative Roundtable—VFW—Rapid City
Dec. 14—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

2014

Jan. 14—South Dakota Legislative Session Opens
Jan. 17—SDNG Legislative Breakfast
Jan. 18- 129th MPAD Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Rapid City
Jan. 24-26—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Crossroads—Huron
Jan. 25-26- 235th MP Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Chamberlain Cedar Shore Resort
Jan. 31—SD Veterans Council Breakfast with Legislators—6:30 am
Feb. 6—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre
Feb. 6—SDNG Dining Out
Feb 15-16- 152nd Reintegration 30 Day Yellow Ribbon Event—Sioux Falls
Feb. 18-20—SDDVA New VSO Orientation—Sioux Falls
Apr. 5-6—152nd Yellow Ribbon
May 2-4—DAV Conference—Ramkota Hotel—Aberdeen
Jun. 19-22—American Legion Conference—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
Aug. 25-27—SDDVA Veterans Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre

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